DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 267 638 FL 015 590

AUTHOR Averill, Jane
TITLE Double Cloze: An Activity for the Student Centered Classroom.
PUB DATE 9 Nov 85
NOTE 8p.; Paper presented at the Midwest Regional Conference of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (Omaha, NE, Nov 9, 1985).
PUB TYPE Guides - Classroom Use - Guides (For Teachers) (052) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Class Activities; *Classroom Techniques; *Cloze Procedure; Communicative Competence (Languages); *English (Second Language); *Group Activities; *Questioning Techniques; Second Language Instruction; Speech Communication

ABSTRACT

A double cloze activity, designed to use the cloze procedure to create a realistic context for the exchange of information in the classroom, uses two versions of the same text with different words deleted in each. The administration of the double cloze can be divided into four parts. First, the students listen twice to a reading or recording of the untouched text, and fill in the blank spaces in their text copies. Students are paired so that each student in a pair has a different version of the text. They are given a second handout that outlines phrases for the functions they have learned in class, such as asking for information, clarification, or affirmation. While not allowed to look at each other's papers, the students use the phrases on their handouts to seek information from their partners, varying the phrases to reflect a variety of speaker/listener relationships suggested by the teacher. It is preferred that students not look at the phrases while speaking them. This exchange can be followed up with group discussion or guided questions. In this activity, teachers are free to provide individualized instruction while students practice, the time spent actively speaking the language is maximized, students are not threatened by the situation, realistic communicative exchange takes place, and students are motivated. Some examples of double cloze activities are appended. (MSE)

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A paper presented to MIDTESOL fall conference
on November 9, 1985 in Omaha, NE.
by Jane Averill, Emporia State University

DOUBLE CLOZE: AN ACTIVITY FOR THE STUDENT CENTERED CLASSROOM

The fundamental goal of most second language conversation courses is to make students more effective oral communicators in the "real world." To meet these communicative needs, we as language teachers must structure classroom learning through activities which take into account the complex nature of oral communication, create a realistic context for the exchange of information, and stimulate student interest. Much of the current ESL literature emphasizes the fact that teachers should actively involve language learners in order to develop communicative competence (Taylor 1983, Savignon 1983, Richards 1985). However, actually finding activities which satisfy these theoretical concerns is a difficult task for classroom teachers.

The double cloze activity, two versions of the same text with different words deleted in each, effectively implements some of these ideas into classroom practice. It maximizes student involvement and instills confidence through its simplicity. In addition, students can practice some of the more subtle aspects of oral communication because it creates an opportunity to use gambits and cues which signal interest in the speaker. As the activity is most effectively completed in pairwork, the double cloze works well in a student-centered, communicatively-oriented classroom.

The double cloze is a modification of the cloze procedure which is widely used in the second language field as a testing device and as a means to improve reading skills. It became much more common after work done by Oller and others at UCLA in the early seventies when its reliability as a testing device was verified (Hinofotis 1980). However, the term is not new. In 1953, W. Taylor applied the name "cloze" to a systematic deletion of words from a reading passage which he used to help determine the difficulty level for native speakers. He borrowed the term from Gestalt psychology which uses "clozure" to describe the human tendency to fill in gaps of information. Since humans have this psycho-

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logical tendency, they are able to anticipate meaning by using contextual clues as they read.

To create a cloze, a teacher deletes words from a text in a fixed ratio (every fifth word, for example). Students then receive the text with the deletions and must supply the missing items by evaluating the context. Several variations of this standard form exist including deletion of a certain category of words (part of speech, cohesive device) or inclusion of a list of choices for the completion (Savignon 1983:258).

The double cloze is yet another variation on the standard form. To create a double cloze, the instructor would make two cloze procedures of the same text. Almost any written material could be used, but I have chosen a song since it is already in recorded form and provides a stepping-stone for later discussion. As you can see from the two handouts, every fifth word has been deleted from copy A and every fifth word after the second word has been deleted from copy B (see appendix 1). When students work in pairs, each member of the pair has a different copy, so by asking for and giving information they can accurately complete the task.

The administration of the double cloze can be divided into four parts. Each student is given one of two copies of a passage. After that, they should be informed that they will work with a partner but not necessarily informed that the partner will have a different copy of the same passage. The first part of the activity includes the listening section in which the passage is read or a recording played while students listen two times. Then, students should be instructed to look at their copy and fill in the blanks based on the context. The third step includes breaking students into pairs so that one member of the pair has an "A" copy and the other member has a "B" copy. At this point students should be given the second handout (see appendix 2) which outlines functions they have learned in class such as asking for information, asking for clarification, affirmation,

etc. They should also be informed of the basic rules of the exercise: a) they may not look at their partner's paper b) they should use the phrases on the handout varying them according to the speaker/listener relationship which the teacher determines (teacher may call out different characters varying in age, social status and rank, such as an 80-year-old woman, a child, etc.) c) students should be encouraged to use R. Via's drama technique (1976) which forces them to talk and look. To accomplish this, they must look at the script, then look at the listener while they talk. They may not look at the text while talking. If they forget the line, they may look at the text again but must start at the beginning again each time they forget. The final step in the administration of the double cloze demands that the teacher circulate, listen for effectiveness of communication, offer suggestions, etc. After students complete the information exchange, the activity could be extended if students broke into small groups and discussed the song or passage using guided questions.

The double cloze activity offers an excellent way to put the goals of the student-centered classroom and a communicative-based syllabus into practice. From the instructor's perspective, the activity is easy to design, administer and vary. The activity is structured so that the teacher is free to offer individualized instruction while students practice. The pairwork maximizes the time students are actively involved in speaking the language, as is desireable in a student-centered classroom. The student, on the other hand, is not threatened by the situation which requires her/him only to give limited information to one other party. The activity simulates a realistic communicative exchange in that turn-taking must be established, cues that understanding is taking place must be given, and the need for the exchange of information is discovered. Since students understand that there is a purpose for the informational exchange (i. e. accurate completion of the task), they are highly motivated and interested in listening as well as speaking. Perhaps the most convincing reason for using the

double cloze in the classroom is that students enjoy it. Classroom teachers will also enjoy the activity when they "hear" the students' enthusiasm as they actively communicate their information.

Appendix 1

Double Cloze: A

"Imagine" by John Lennon

Imagine there's no heaven, _____ easy if you try

_____ hell below us, above _____ only sky

Imagine all _____people living for today

_____ there's no countries, it _____ hard to do

Nothing _____ kill or die for _____ no religions too

Imagine _____ the people living life _____ peace.

You may say _____ a dreamer

But I'm _____ the only one

I _____ someday you'll join us

_____ the world will live _____ one.

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(note: in the classroom use two separate handouts)

Double Cloze: B

Imagine there's no heaven, it's easy _____ you try

No hell _____ us, above us only _____

Imagine all the people _____ for today.

Imagine there's _____countries, it isn't hard _____do

Nothing to kill _____ die for and no _____ too

Imagine all the _____ living life in peace

_____ may say I'm a _____

But I'm not the _____ one

I hope someday _____ join us

and the _____ will live as one.

Appendix 2

DOUBLE CLOZE: AN ACTIVITY FOR THE STUDENT-CENTERED CONVERSATION CLASS

Asking for information

What is the first (2nd, 3rd, 4th) word in the first line? (next) (informal)

What do you have after _____?

What is the third word?

Could you tell me the fifth word?

Would you mind telling me the fifth word?

(more informal)

Asking for clarification/restatement

How do you spell that?

Could you say that slowly?

Pardon?

Could you repeat that?

Would you mind repeating that?

Did you say_____?

That was _____, right?

Affirmation/Agreeing

That's right/correct

That's what I have

I agree with you

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many thanks to Penny James, who is presently teaching EFL in Wakayama, Japan and who first introduced the double cloze activity to me.